

**Amendments to the Abstract**

Amend the Abstract to read as follows:

This invention relates to preparation and use of nanocomposites formed in situ within an elastomer host wherein the nanocomposite is comprised of an elastomer matrix and a dispersion therein of at least partially exfoliated clay platelets. Rubber composites can be prepared by blending such nanocomposite with additional elastomer(s), additional reinforcing filler(s) and/or a coupling agent. The invention further relates to the preparation of articles of manufacture, including tires, having at least one component comprised of said nanocomposite or said rubber composite. Such a tire component may be selected from, for example, tire tread and tire innerliner.